

President's Update - April 11, 2019



It is National Library Week! Since 1958, libraries across the country have been celebrating National Library Week by acknowledging our patrons, staff, and all the innovative and engaging services we provide our communities. The American Library Association established this year's theme as Libraries = Strong Communities.

Let's reflect on the many ways the Michigan Library Association (MLA) helps libraries build strong communities. Through its advocacy efforts to the legislature, MLA has worked to protect library funding; fought to allow library staff to administer Narcan without retribution; and fought for tax capture money. In addition, MLA has provided professional development opportunities for all levels of staff and helped to promote libraries around the state. MLA achieves this with five incredibly, dedicated staff members. In the past few months, this staff has welcomed new faces and bid Executive Director Gail Madziar a happy retirement. Thank you to the MLA staff for all you do to help libraries make our communities strong! Personally, I feel libraries deserve far more than one week to celebrate all we do and our value.

As you all know, MLA is actively working on getting the Narcan bills passed through the legislature. House bills 4366 and 4367 passed unanimously through the House. We are working on moving these bills through the Senate Health Policy and Human Services Committee this week. I want everyone to understand that these bills do not make it mandatory for libraries to carry or administer Narcan. They allow those libraries who choose to carry Narcan, and those who have to use it to help save a life, to do so without fear of being prosecuted.

Narcan is not harmful should staff administer it to someone who is not actually overdosing. In addition, there is good training available on administering Narcan. One perception is that people who are given Narcan tend to be violent coming out of the overdose. This can be true, but law enforcement officials have shared that this depends on the person, and it is not the norm. It does take a second or two for the Narcan to hit the brain. Anyone who administers Narcan should be well trained and know to step back immediately. In a recent conversation with the Deputy Chief of Police of East Lansing, I learned that within three to five minutes of an

overdose, someone could be brain dead, and it only takes minutes for someone to go into cardiac arrest when they stop breathing and are overdosing. Administering Narcan is a stop-gap to help someone in crisis until the first responders get to the person. Yes, this is extremely scary and conflicting, that is why this is an individual choice of libraries.

Again, another huge reason libraries and library staff should be celebrated every single day and how Libraries = Strong Communities. Andrew Carnegie poignantly said, "A library outranks any other one thing a community can do to benefit its people. It is a never-failing spring in the desert." Thank you to all staff of Michigan libraries, you are terrific!

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